

From Kathryn Turner
Head of Pharmacy & Medicines Management
(Interim), SPPG



By email

To Community Pharmacies in
Newtownabbey, Greenisland,
Carrickfergus, Whitehead and Larne

**Strategic Planning and Performance
Group**

5th Floor,
Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8DQ
Tel: 02895 363683
Email: kathryn.turner@hscni.net

Date: 27th February 2026

Dear Colleague,

**RE: COMMENCEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY PHARMACY OVER-THE-COUNTER
CODEINE BRIEF INTERVENTION & REFERRAL PILOT SERVICE**

I am pleased to advise that the Community Pharmacy Over-the-Counter (OTC) Codeine Brief Intervention & Referral Pilot Service will commence on Monday 13th April. The pilot will run until Sunday 13th September, in the first instance, subject to available funding.

The Service Specification and supporting resources for the pilot are available on the [BSO Harm Reduction Services website](#). Printed copies of some resources, including the Risk Assessment Tool and information leaflets, will be issued by the Public Health Agency (PHA) to all participating Community Pharmacies prior to commencement of the service.

It is anticipated that each participating pharmacy may identify approximately 15 clients over the pilot period. **As the service is dependent on available funding the service may need to be paused or withdrawn if, for example, activity exceeds expected levels.** PHA will undertake a formal evaluation of the service during this period and there will be the potential to extend the pilot, subject to available funding. Customer Feedback Questionnaires will be distributed to Pharmacies as part of the evaluation, along with further information on the evaluation process.

The ASCERT “Codeine Awareness and Brief Interventions for Pharmacists” training, as outlined in the training requirements section of the Service Specification, will take place on Thursday 12th March 2026 at 7.30pm to 9.30pm via Zoom and will be recorded. **N.B. All Pharmacists must complete the training prior to providing the service and share the key points with all relevant staff.** Please register to attend the training using the

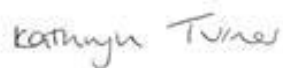
following link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/over-the-counter-codeine-awareness-and-brief-interventions-for-pharmacists-tickets-1977702895599?aff=oddtcreator>. All pharmacies are strongly encouraged to participate in this opportunity. If you have any issues or concerns in relation to accessing the training please contact Elena Brewer (elena@ascert.biz).

In advance of delivering the service, Community Pharmacies must submit a contract on MS Forms via the following link: <https://forms.office.com/e/r8CHXZSsW1>. **Please be advised that submission of the contract is confirmation by the Contractor that the Pharmacy Contractor/Responsible Pharmacist is delivering the service in line with the Service Specification by suitably trained and competent staff.** Please note, as outlined in the Service Specification, a data sharing agreement must be in place between each Community Pharmacy and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT). A template is available on the [BSO Harm Reduction website](#).

If you have any queries in relation to this pilot service, please contact Michael.McCabe@hscni.net (Pharmacy Advisor, SPPG) in the first instance.

Finally, thank you for your interest in providing this vital Community Pharmacy Harm Reduction Service.

Yours sincerely,



Kathryn Turner
Head of Pharmacy and Medicines
Management (Interim), SPPG



Stephanie Hanlon,
Joint Substance Use Lead,
PHA



Dr Lisa Byers, PHD, IP, MPSNI
Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer